Systems Perspective of Substance Abuse & Dependence

ADAPT Program / 59 MDW

Alcoholism/Addiction:

- Doesn't develop in a vacuum
- Has specific contributing factors
- Has a predictable course of progression & outcome
- Has a genetic predisposition

Alcoholism/Addiction is NOT:

- A lack of willpower
- A lack of intelligence
- From “bad character”
- A sin
- The same for all people

The development of and recovery from addiction is based on social, psychological and biological factors; this "recipe" explains why some people develop alcoholism and some don't.

By understanding what got us to where we are, we can identify possible barriers to recovery and potential relapse triggers that can block our

What is a "System"?

A System:

EXTENDED FAMILY
FAMILY
JOB
FINANCES
FRIENDS
YO
U
CULTURE/RACE/ETHNICITY
HEALTH HISTORY
LEGAL HISTORY
SUBSTANCE USE HISTORY
MENTAL HEALTH HISTORY
SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND

Remember:

- When you change one part of a system, one of these things happens:
  1. The system does not change (stasis)
  2. The other parts of the system change to adapt to new circumstances

If other parts of the system or the system as a whole does not change when one part changes, the system is in danger of not functioning well or breaking down altogether!

3 Main Factors in Developing & Recovering From an Addiction:

1. Heredity
2. Environment
3. Exposure

Biological Functioning:

- Past withdrawal?
- Other drug use?
- Eating & sleeping problems?
- Craving to drink?
- Physical health problems?
- Other problems made worse by drinking?

Emotional & Behavioral Functioning:

- Other addictions? Tobacco or caffeine?
- Compulsive behaviors?
- Family history?
- Mental health history?
- Suicidal or homicidal ideation?
- Job or school problems?
- Problems with military?
- Legal problems?

Social Functioning:

- Drinking a “norm”?
- Peer group drink?
- Friends or drinking buddies?
- Activities centered around alcohol?
- Can you say “No”
- Support system?

Could it be ME?